



Dissertation Abstracts **2013**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EVIDENCE-BASED ADMISSIONS: CORRELATES OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN VETERINARY MEDICAL SCHOOL

Hilda Mejia Abreu *Advisor: Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski*

CASE STUDIES INVOLVING DISPLACED WORKERS' TRANSITION TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Lillian R. Brooks *Advisor: Dr. Kristen Renn*

INTERRACIAL CONTACT: THE IMPACT ON UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENTS' RACIAL PERCEPTIONS

Kevin Philo Leonard *Advisor: Dr. Reitu Mabokela*

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Kang Li *Advisor: Dr. Kristen Renn*

CHANGE IN MEASURED NONCOGNITIVE VARIABLES: A QUANTITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES

Reginald James Motley *Advisor: Dr. Kristen Renn*

OCEANS CROSSING: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC INTEGRATION OF KOREAN, MALAYSIAN, AND TAIWANESE INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Hoa Pham *Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey*

I ALUMNUS: UNDERSTANDING EARLY ALUMNI IDENTITY

Barnaby Pung *Advisor: Dr. Steven Weiland*

UNDERSTANDING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' MOTIVATION FOR JOINING TEACHING IN PAKISTAN

Ayesha Razzaque *Advisor: Dr. Reitu Mabokela*

AN EXPLORATION OF PRESIDENTIAL ROLES DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

Niki J. Rudolph *Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin*

THE GRADUATE EXPERIENCE OF MEXICAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN US DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

Gloria Gabriela Tanner *Advisor: Dr. James Fairweather*

WHITE UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES: EXPERIENCES THAT INFLUENCE CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE CAMPUS SETTINGS

Jesse S. Watson *Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey*



HILDA MEJIA ABREU, 2013

EVIDENCE-BASED ADMISSIONS: CORRELATES OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN VETERINARY MEDICAL SCHOOL

Advisor: Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski

Abstract

Literature on the admission criteria and processes related to academic success of professional students at any of the twenty-eight veterinary medical schools in the United States is limited and research on what predicts students' academic success has not been regularly examined (Pappaioanou, 2010). The current study investigated the extent to which traditional academic characteristics (i.e., cumulative grade point average, science grade point average, and graduate record examination scores) and non-traditional student characteristics (i.e., communication and interpersonal skills, the essay or self-assessment survey, prior knowledge of the profession, and community service as assessed via the interview process) predicted students' academic performance at Michigan State University (MSU) College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM). Several analyses were performed to determine the contribution of traditional and nontraditional factors as predictors of students' academic performance in veterinary medical school as measured by their grade point average in the veterinary school program at two points: (a) the completion of the didactic portion of the curriculum (the first five semesters) and (b) the completion of the clinical portion of the curriculum (the last four semesters).

The interpretation of the results yielded significant findings in several areas: (a) the identification of characteristics of traditional and non-traditional students that were predictive of academic performance in the veterinary school relative to students' cumulative grade point average in the clinical and didactic portion of the curriculum; (b) the identification of traditional academic characteristics that were predictive of student placement status of academic probation; and (c) support for the expectation that the cumulative didactic grade point average was predictive of the cumulative clinical grade point average. Through the identification of variables related to both traditional and non-traditional characteristics, variables that were predictive of students' academic performance in one veterinary school, administrators at other programs for health care professional programs may be encouraged to review and evaluate the strength of their admission criteria to ensure the reliability and validity of their applicant selection processes.



LILLIAN R. BROOKS, 2013

CASE STUDIES INVOLVING DISPLACED WORKERS' TRANSITION TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Advisor: Dr. Kristen Renn

Abstract

The focus of this qualitative study is how community college transition programs and services accommodated students who experienced a major life transition event (job loss) using Schlosberg's (1984) Life Transition Model and the updated model with Anderson and Goodman (2006). Students' perceptions of transition programs and services were juxtaposed with the perceptions of faculty, counselors, and administrators to understand how close or how far the colleges' were in offering wrap-around level services. Three overarching themes emerged from the research data: 1) the student participants reported that, where wrap-around level supports were available and they utilized them, many difficulties in transitioning to college were alleviated; 2) there were organizational issues that mitigated the colleges' ability to sustain wrap-around level services; and 3) the administrators, faculty, counselors, and staff in both cases reported that the colleges' willingness to provide services at the wrap-around level varied depending on external funding resources.

Analysis of students' perspectives revealed two transition experiences characterized by moving away from being a displaced worker to becoming fully engaged as a college student. The second transition experience manifested transition barriers which revealed a gap in student services at the main campuses. Significant themes that emerged were learning math, using computers, organizational issues, and building relationships between students and college personnel. Sub-significant themes included orientation, credit articulation, counseling and advising, cohorts and learning communities, and bureaucratic processes.



KEVIN PHILO LEONARD, 2013

INTERRACIAL CONTACT: THE IMPACT ON UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENTS' RACIAL PERCEPTIONS

Advisor: Dr. Reitu Mabokela

Abstract

The impact of interracial interaction has been looked at from a myriad of approaches and different populations; time and time again researchers have found similar results showing a wide variety of personal, institutional, and societal benefits are correlated to interactions with diverse individuals. Wishing to further examine the impact of interracial interaction, I set out to explore the relationship between frequent and positive interracial contact and business students' racial perceptions. In order to investigate this potential relationship, the following research question was investigated: do undergraduate business students who have frequent and positive interracial interactions exhibit more of less positive racial perceptions of other races? Participants included 910 domestic undergraduate business students enrolled at a large public research university in the Midwest.

A structured web-based quantitative survey design was used to answer this question. Measures include students' perceptions/attitudes toward other racial groups (dependent variable), the opportunity for contact, frequency of contact, and quality of contact (independent variables), and various demographic variables designed to collect information ranging from students' age and gender to their hometown and parents education level.

Data was analyzed using t-test and ANOVA statistical procedures. The final results of this study indicate that business students who have frequent (weekly or daily) and positive interracial interactions typically possess more positive racial perceptions than their peers whose interactions are infrequent (never, once or twice a year or semester) and less positive. More specifically, the findings show that (1) business students who reported more opportunities for contact (i.e., structural diversity) generally had moderately more positive racial perceptions than students who reported having less opportunity for interracial contact, (2) business students who identified interacting frequently (weekly or daily) with members of other racial groups possessed moderately more positive racial perceptions than students whose interactions were less frequent (never or once or twice a year/semester), (3) business students who rated their overall interracial experiences to date as positive or very positive held significantly more positive racial perceptions than students who rated their interracial interactions as neutral, negative or very negative, and (4) a business student's race significantly influences his or her racial attitude.



KANG LI, 2013

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Advisor: Dr. Kristen Renn

Abstract

This phenomenological study investigated the lived experiences of identity development of Chinese graduate students in the United States. Through in-depth interviews with 15 participants at a Midwestern research university, the study found that the majority of Chinese graduate students came with a strong student identity that conflated with personal identity and that they continued to develop their identity in the new environment. They encountered five significant contexts that wove together to form an overall developmental environment, which, along with their prior identity, determined the range, variety, and quality of interactions that they had. As a result, they developed multiple dimensions of identity through a bidirectional movement of identity differentiation and integration.

The study identified five themes that represent the significant contexts that coexisted in forming an enmeshed developmental environment for Chinese graduate students. These five themes also represent the identity dimensions that Chinese graduate students commonly developed. The themes include language barrier and language identity, academic adjustment and academic identity, cultural adaptation and cultural identity, social adjustment and social emotional identity, and managing logistics and logistical identity.

The study provided a general contour of Chinese graduate students' identity development to illustrate their overall developmental experiences. It showed that their multiple dimensions of identity gradually differentiated from their personal identity while differentiating identity dimensions integrated into personal identity at the same time. Consequently, they increased the levels of complexity, consistency, and integrity of their identity through a continuing two directional movement of identity differentiation and integration over a long period of time. They maintained a dynamic interactional relationship among multiple identities that they developed in the process.



REGINALD JAMES MOTLEY, 2013

CHANGE IN MEASURED NONCOGNITIVE VARIABLES: A QUANTITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES

Advisor: Dr. Kristen Renn

Abstract

Students have different motivations for participating in education abroad experiences. Short-term study abroad programs offer students the opportunity to experience education abroad without spending an entire semester or year abroad. As a result of these opportunities, short-term study abroad programs have emerged to meet the demands for students who are interested in international educational abroad opportunities.

The purpose of my study was to examine the influence of short-term study abroad programs on change in noncognitive variables. The term noncognitive is used to refer to variables relating to adjustment, motivation, and perceptions (Sedlacek, 2004). Noncognitive variables have been useful in assessing students and also serve as a predictor of success for students. The eight noncognitive variables identified by Sedlacek (2004) that I examined were: Positive self-concept, Realistic self-appraisal, Successfully handling the system, Long-range goals, Strong support person, Leadership experience, Community involvement, and Knowledge acquired in a field.

The goal of this study was to investigate the change in noncognitive variables before and after participation in short-term study abroad programs. The results of my study support the ideal that short-term study abroad programs have an influence on noncognitive variables. Specifically of the eight noncognitive variables that were examined the following five exhibited changes from their initial examination: Positive self-concept, Successfully handling the system, Long-range goals, Leadership, and Knowledge in a field. Furthermore, the results indicate that there are some specific factors that influence the change in noncognitive variables, these factors are: previous travel abroad, first time experience studying abroad, living with a family while abroad, and the geographic region which the short-term study abroad program takes place.



HOA PHAM, 2013

OCEANS CROSSING: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC INTEGRATION OF KOREAN, MALAYSIAN, AND TAIWANESE INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT A RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

International students make up a significant and growing portion of the total U.S. college student population. The number of international students, especially Asian international students, studying at colleges and universities in the United States has increased dramatically during the past 50 years. In the 2009-2010 academic year, there were 435,667 students from Asia studying at U.S. colleges and universities, a 5% increase over the previous year (Open Doors, 2010). As the fastest growing population on campus, Asian international students are also attracting more attention than ever before in higher education. However, much research has focused on Asian students' adjustment and adaptation to American culture and campus life.

This study investigated factors contributing to social and academic integration of Korean, Malaysian and Taiwanese international undergraduate students. According to Guiffrida (2006), Asian international students who maintain collectivist cultural values integrate into a new environment differently than other groups of American minority students. This study sought understanding of why some or many of the Asian international undergraduate students integrate into college successfully despite having many challenges. Might their distinctive characteristics, country of origin, cultural norms and values, and other internal as well as external factors have significant bearing on the challenges of their social and academic integration? Specifically, guided by the Behavior-Perception-Behavior Model (Milem & Berger, 1997), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1991, 2000), this study investigated how students were making a successful transition into the institution and how they integrated into the university community.

This qualitative case study gained insights into students' attitudes, behaviors, their cultures and values systems, concerns, motivations, and aspirations to become integrated to a new college environment. The study found that participants' limited cultural awareness and knowledge of America and its educational system, and language proficiency for engaging in cross-cultural interactions proved to be factors influencing their social and academic integration. However, most Korean, Malaysian, and Taiwanese participants in this study were both highly intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to do well in college and were very goal-oriented. Most participants were more academically integrated than socially integrated. Most were satisfied with their academic experiences, personal growth, and success. Most students got involved in their country student organizations and participated in different events on campus to get opportunities. Most participants got more involved in both social activities and academic activities after their first year. Malaysian and Taiwanese students in the study were likely to be more socially and academically integrated in the college community than Korean students. In addition, major differences in academic and social integration were found among those interviewed participating students. The participants who enrolled in higher ranking programs such as education, communication, engineering, business, and natural sciences got more involved in campus and thus, became more integrated and more affiliated with their institution while students in economic programs felt marginalized in the campus community.

The study offered suggestions for improving policies and practices, theories, and future research on Asian international undergraduate students. Both Self-determination theory and the Behavior-Perception-Behavior model proved that they were conceptually useful through the rich findings of the study. The study proved that Asian international students are not a homogenous group and their needs and concerns differ by country of origin, ethnicity, age, year in college, programs of study, and educational background. Developing cross-cultural programs to facilitate interaction between domestic and international students would help international students improve their English and become more confident in interacting with diverse people. Orientation should not only last for a week or two at the beginning of the academic year, but rather be an ongoing activity. The study showed that Korean, Malaysian, and Taiwanese student associations play an important role in the participants' lives during their time studying in the U.S. Student country organizations, student support staff, and other service units could work together to design programs responding to the needs of international students. More activities should be organized throughout the academic year to provide opportunities for making friends and augmenting peer group interactions.



BARNABY PUNG, 2013

I ALUMNUS: UNDERSTANDING EARLY ALUMNI IDENTITY

Advisor: Dr. Steven Weiland

Abstract

This dissertation sought to provide a better understanding of early alumnus identity at a public Midwestern university. Unlike a majority of alumni studies, this study used a qualitative case study methodology to examine alumni identity among participants through the use of personal interviews. Participants were 10-11 years post graduation from the same large Midwestern public university. Interview questions examined their identity as an alumna or alumnus through discussion of their level of engagement at their alma mater during their undergraduate years, their level of engagement with formal and informal alumni activities since, and their overall satisfaction with their professional and social experiences since graduation. The qualitative methodology allowed for deeper examination of the significant factors contributing to a salient alumni identity while still allowing for other themes and factors to emerge from the data. The theoretical frame for analysis was based in the Identity Saliency Model of Relationship Marketing Success proposed by (Arnett, German, and Hunt, 2003). Based on their conclusions, those who exhibit higher identity saliency as an alumnus (as a function of participation, prestige and satisfaction) are more likely to donate to and promote the institution. Given their findings, the results of this dissertation on early alumni identity have implications for fundraising.

The key findings of this dissertation are as follows: 1) PMU alumni describe their experience as alumni primarily in terms of informal peer-social groups (i.e. close friends); 2) Alumni perceptions of academic and work preparation appear to play an important role in how they understand their college experience and frame their experience since graduation; 3) Other's perceptions of PMU appear to influence alumni perceptions of institutional quality and value. Implications of the findings and recommendations for practitioners can be found at the conclusion of the study.



AYESHA RAZZAQUE, 2013

UNDERSTANDING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' MOTIVATION FOR JOINING TEACHING IN PAKISTAN

Advisor: Dr. Reitu Mabokela

Abstract

Who chooses to become a teacher in Pakistan, why, and what are their perceptions about teaching? The author of this dissertation study profiled the background characteristics and examined motivations and perceptions about teaching among entry level and advanced cohorts of preservice elementary teachers (n = 937) encompassing two new teacher education program (ADE and B. Ed Hons) in three provinces of Pakistan. The Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) instrument was translated into Urdu and its factor structure and reliability assessed in the Pakistani context. Altruistic type 'make social contribution' was the most influential, followed by ability, and intrinsic reasons in both entry and advanced level cohorts. Although trends in motivations remained the same across subgroups (based on gender, programs, science versus non science, provinces, parental occupation, decision time, prior teaching experience, and first career choice), differences existed in the level of scoring on each motivation. MANOVAs were carried out to find multivariate differences on the basis of subgroups. Females and those with teacher parents scored higher on personal utility factors; ADE enrollees scored higher on intrinsic reasons, those who made a decision to enter teaching before finishing high school, non-science majors, those with prior teaching experience, and those who chose to apply only to teacher education scored higher on intrinsic reasons. With regards to perception, overall all subgroups perceived teaching as a high demand (difficult and requiring expertise) but low return (low social status and salary) occupation. Advanced level preservice teachers appeared less satisfied with their choice of teaching than entry level teachers. Findings are interpreted in light the socio-economic and cultural context of teaching as a profession in Pakistan. Findings have implications for recruitment and retention of teachers in the context of acute teacher shortage and dismal student learning outcomes in Pakistan.



NIKI J. RUDOLPH, 2013

AN EXPLORATION OF PRESIDENTIAL ROLES DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

Colleges and universities across the country are seeking ways to strategically position their campuses within the growingly competitive landscape of higher education. The presidents of these institutions are approaching these changes with a watchful eye on the fiscal, environmental, and human resources involved.

The purpose of this study was to learn about the roles that university presidents play during the transformational change to increase the environmental sustainability of their campuses. The setting for this study was two, liberal arts colleges that had both approached sustainability as a campus-wide initiative. This study employed a qualitative design to understand what roles presidents at small, liberal arts colleges, employ throughout the period of transformational change. The study involved interviews of key administrators, faculty, and staff and review of pertinent document on each campus. Specifically, this study used a multi-case study to examine the following research questions: 1. What roles do presidents of small, liberal arts college, play during a period of institutional transformation in regard to increasing institutional sustainability? 2. How do presidents select the roles that they play throughout the institutional transformation? 3. Do these roles change as the period of transformation occurs? If so, why and how?

The results of this study identified the overarching approach used in being a president, the interaction of that way of being president and the change process, and several roles that served key functions within the change process. Recommendations for college presidents, the search committees of presidents, and campuses engaging in sustainability efforts are presented.



GLORIA GABRIELA TANNER, 2013

THE GRADUATE EXPERIENCE OF MEXICAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN US DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

Advisor: Dr. James Fairweather

Abstract

Although extensive research on the experience of international students in American higher education exists, little research has been done on international students from Latin America. Latin American students represent the second largest group of international students in the United States by world region after Asia (Institute of International Education, 2009). In addition, while international graduate students represent 41 % of all international students in the U.S., there is a lack of information about their experiences in American institutions. Most of the research discusses international students as one, single classification and does not differentiate between different nationalities (Kagan & Cohen, 1990; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). However, the country of origin likely plays a key role in how international students adjust to life in the United States. Experiences of international students need to be examined based on their nationality and not region (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002). This study aims to expand the little research on international graduate students from Latin America by looking at international doctoral students from Mexico. The research looks at the cultural adjustment of Mexican doctoral students in American institutions and focuses on how country of origin (and destination), gender, discipline and social class affect Mexican doctoral student's cultural adjustment. The following questions are addressed: What factors affect the acculturation of Mexican doctoral students? and Does the degree of acculturation differ by gender, academic discipline, destination, and social class?

For this study a model was constructed following Berry's model of acculturation (1997). The data was organized to include variables regarding the student's academic experience, cultural experience and personal experience. To measure acculturation, this model included seven outcomes and eleven predictors. This study used quantitative methodology to collect data utilizing a web-based survey. The target population for this study was Mexican doctoral students sponsored by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) in US institutions. 235 Mexican doctoral students in the U.S. responded, a response rate of 52%.

Among the findings in this research, I found similarities in the acculturation experience of international students and Mexican doctoral students. However, the findings also showed that there were experiences better examined through the student's nationality rather than a single group that included all international students. The findings from this study are meaningful for Mexican doctoral students in the United States, The CONACYT program, The Mexican government, The U.S. government, American institutions and post-secondary institutions around the world. On the one hand, Mexican doctoral students can gain insight into the challenges their colleagues have. The findings of this study can also increase the sense of belonging of Mexican doctoral students to a group that could enable them to share their experiences, network and enrich their participation as a Mexican doctoral student in the United States. On the other hand, international sponsorship programs, the Mexican government, the U.S. government, American institutions and other higher education institutions around the world can learn from the findings how they can better support this understudied population to help them succeed in their doctoral programs. There should be a shared responsibility not only to the doctoral students, but international sponsorship programs and American institutions to create the best environment for students to succeed.



JESSE S. WATSON, 2013

WHITE UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES: EXPERIENCES THAT INFLUENCE CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE CAMPUS SETTINGS

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

This study explored how the experiences of four white, undergraduate, self-identified social justice advocates influenced their on campus participation in racially and ethnically diverse settings. Acknowledging the existence and persistence of white privilege, ontological expansiveness, and epistemological ignorance, the research was grounded in critical white studies and influenced by the tenets of critical race theory. Their experiences as sustained participants in racially and ethnically diverse settings such as the Black Student Alliance, the Multicultural Hall, and other campus based gathering locations of racial/ethnic minority students at a small liberal arts college were collected through in depth interviews. The data were analyzed using portraiture and constant comparative methods. Key findings included the impact of social tourism; the difference between advertised and experienced institutional climate, culture and liberalism; the role of multicultural residence halls; and the importance of developing diverse networks.